

London Borough of Camden Open Data Charter

November 2015

What is Open Data?

Data is considered to be “open” if anyone can freely use, re-use and redistribute them, for any purpose, without restrictions¹.

Why is Open Data important to Camden?

Camden is a democratically accountable public body. We believe residents have a right to access data which does not compromise people’s privacy. This is why the overarching principle of the Council’s Open Data Charter is **open by default**.

Camden’s Digital Strategy made clear our commitment to the publication of Open Data. It is a priority for Camden despite our unprecedented financial challenge because we believe it creates value.

Open Data creates value for **residents** by providing information in new and accessible ways to help them make decisions about their lives and their communities. It helps them to hold councillors and council officers to account for their decisions and policies.

Open Data creates value for the **council** by reducing the time spent providing data for different audiences and by forming the basis of new apps and website functionality. It can also provide a stronger evidence base for its decisions and policies.

Open Data creates value for **businesses** by making data available in formats that they can reuse for economic and social benefits.

In this way, the council believes Open Data contributes to the Camden Plan in particular by underpinning our role as the democratic leader of the borough, delivering value for money services and creating the conditions for economic growth. But Open Data has the potential to support many other outcomes of the Camden Plan from better homes to sustainable neighbourhoods and carbon reduction.

The benefits of Open Data guide our approach to what we publish and how we publish it.

What we publish

We aim to publish data that provides benefits to residents, council or IT developers. Our assumption is that we should publish our data unless there is a good reason not to. We want to understand what data residents and developers want to access and do our best to publish it. We attempt to predict demand but not to presume it. But in the interests of good use of public resources, we won’t publish data if there is insufficient demand for it.

¹ [Open Data Institute](#)

Our commitment to Open Data in no way undermines our commitment to privacy, data protection, confidentiality or protecting commercially sensitive data. We won't publish personal data or other data which might allow individuals to be identified (unless publication is in accordance with law and having carefully considered the impact of classing this data as open) and we won't publish genuinely commercially sensitive or confidential data in line with our obligations under access to information legislation.

We are also committed to improving the quality of our data. We won't publish data if we think its quality would affect its usefulness but equally we will not use poor data quality as an excuse for inaction. Data quality is every council officer's responsibility for which they will be held accountable.

We do not see the risk of embarrassment to the Council as a reason not to publish data. With transparency comes the potential for being revealed as fallible but more importantly the scope for the Council to improve its services through collaboration with others.

How we will publish it

We publish our data according standards developed by the government and the Open Data Institute. We aim to publish our data in 5 Star fully open format². We publish it to standard schemas wherever they exist. We will avoid any unnecessary changes to schemas to avoid disruption to apps and programs using our data.

All data is published with associated metadata, including textual descriptions of fields, date and time information and other pertinent information including points of exclusion and clarification.

Unless otherwise stated, data will be published under the Open Government Licence. Where mapping data is created using Ordnance Survey open data sources, then data will be published using the Ordnance Survey Open Data licence.

The decision to publish data will be taken by the appropriate Chief Officer unless otherwise delegated and at a level of seniority appropriate to the level of sensitivity of the data. Where appropriate legal advice will be taken and members informed or consulted.

The Council's commitment to Open Data is reflected in its investment in the systems and officer resources needed to deliver a sustainable programme of data publication.

We publish all our open data on our [Open Data Camden](#) site and through that site make it accessible through London and national open data portals. We welcome feedback and suggestions from users of the site and will act on it wherever possible. We'd also like to hear how users are making use of our open data.

² <http://5stardata.info/>